



We've been talking a lot this year about the importance of conversations with children. One of the most crucial topics to cover is bullying.

Children who are bullied may struggle in their social or emotional development, face physical harm, and suffer academically. Sometimes, these negative impacts last months or even years after the bullying has stopped.

Knowing the signs of bullying and preventing it from starting can be helpful for all children involved, including the bully. Remember, every child is different – some may bring up concerns while others may stay silent. It's OK to ask a child directly if they've ever seen or experienced bullying.

What should I look for?

Changes in mood. Some children may become tearful or unusually emotional before school or around a bully. If you notice these changes, ask them about it privately and remember to listen and validate their emotions.



Physical symptoms. Any unexplained bruises or soreness should be asked about. If your child has frequent stomachaches or headaches before school, this may be due to feelings of stress or fear. Take the time to talk to them about how they're feeling and whether it could be related to problems at school.



Behavioral problems. Many children express their emotions through behaviors. If your child suddenly has emotional outbursts, struggles to follow directions or can't seem to participate in activities without conflict with peers or family, talk to them to find out what may be causing the problem.



Reluctance to go to school. Avoidance of school, places or activities they used to enjoy along with isolation from social situations may also be signs something distressing is happening.



How can I help prevent bullying?

Encourage your child to be kind to everyone, not just their friends. Talk openly about how others experience unfair treatment because of their abilities, what they look like or their background. This helps build awareness, empathy and an inclusive, kind culture for all children. Don't be afraid to share stories of times you experienced unfair treatment and what you did to overcome it.

Check in regularly about your child's daily social interactions. These conversations show you value their emotions and are available to support them if challenges arise. When you ask about potential bullying, be sure to listen, support and validate your child's feelings. Remind them that bullying isn't their fault, and they don't have to face the problem alone.

Bullying Conversation Starters

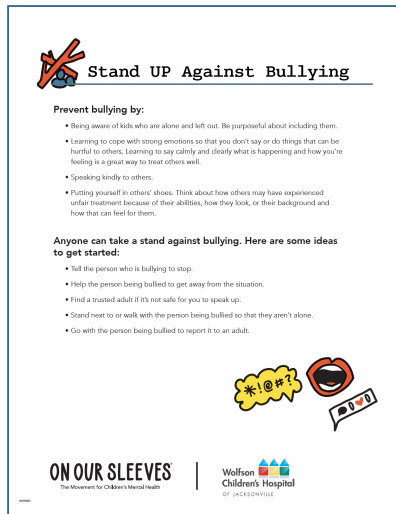
Need help getting the conversation going? Here are some suggestions:

- "What does the word 'bullying' mean to you?"
- "Have you seen kids bullied at school? What happened and how did it make you feel?"
- "What would you do if that happened to you?"
- "Has anyone ever made you feel bullied? What did they say? How can I help?"
- "Why do you think some kids become bullies?"

If you think your child may be experiencing bullying at school, reach out to their teacher or school to discuss. Some suggested conversation starters to use with teachers or school staff are:

- Has the teacher noticed or suspected any bullying?
- How is the child getting along with others in the class?
- Has the teacher noticed your child being isolated, excluded from activities, or anything else concerning?
- How will the teacher investigate the situation and stop the bullying, if found?

For information on ways to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, [check out this article](#).



[Click here](#) to download our tip sheet as a reminder on how to prevent and stand up to bullying. By talking about bullying with your child, you're giving them key tools to spot it and speak out against it. Together, we can make playgrounds, classrooms and streets safer for all children.

Don't forget to share how you're using *On Our Sleeves* resources. Hit the **reply button** to tell us your *On Our Sleeves* story.

Sincerely,
Wolfson Children's Hospital

The mission of *On Our Sleeves* is to provide every community in America access to free, evidence-informed educational resources necessary for breaking stigmas about child mental health and educating families and advocates. **For more information, visit OnOurSleeves.org.**

To access educational resources and revisit the mission of *On Our Sleeves*[®], visit wolfsonchildrens.com/onoursleeves.

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